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ABSTRACT

Based upon the unpublished data of a study focusing upon the status projections of low-income youth from seven southern states (rural white Appalachians, rural blacks, inner-city urban blacks, and poor urban whites from one state), this paper synthesizes a longitudinal analysis of status projections. Baseline data (1969) derived from 1,500 fifth and sixth grade children and their mothers are compared with data obtained after a social intervention experiment in 1971 (a subsample of mothers involved in a series of lesson/discussions on helping children with career planning) and with data derived from 1975 interviews with the same respondents. Additionally, 1975 data on new samples of fifth and sixth grade students are compared. Among the major questions addressed are: rural-urban differences; sex differences; racial differences; differences between the economically disadvantaged and others; educational and occupational aspirations and expectations. Among the generalized results presented are: youth from deprived backgrounds now have aspirations as high or higher than others, with low income preadolescents projecting aspirations as high as those of the affluent youth, blacks higher than whites, girls higher than boys, and rural about as high as urban; and status projections decline substantially from pre- to late adolescence but are still unrealistically high. Finally, this paper presents questions relative to the purpose and value of this kind of rural research. (JC)

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STATUS PROJECTIONS OF LOW-INCOME YOUTH IN THE U.S.A.: CHANGES OVER TIME AND A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

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by

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In the United States during the past 20 or 25 years there has been a great flowering of research on youth status projections, a term that refers to occupational and educational aspirations and expectations (Kuvlesky and Ohlendorf, 1966). This research has been heavily empirical and not very theoretical (Picou and Wells, 1976). Much of it has been carried out by rural sociologists, about rural youth or comparing rural and urban youth. It derives from social concerns about the status attainment process in U.S. society, given our assumptions about equal opportunity and social mobility based on ability and merit on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the increasingly documented structural impediments encountered by rural and minority youth (Blau and Duncan, 1967). In the case of rural youth the most obvious of these impediments is that in recent decades most of them have had to seek careers in the urban-industrial sector, in competition with urban youth socialized and formally trained in that kind of society and economy (Cowhig et al, 1966). Minority youth have had a similar and even more severe handicap of socialization when it comes to our "contest mobility" system (Turner, 1960). And finally, during the past decade, we have become more aware of the severe structural and normative constraints imposed on female youth.

Underlying the youth status projections research is the implicit assumption that aspirations and expectations are predictive, in some degree, of actual attainment in adult life and that there is a patterned status attainment process which begins in childhood and might be subject to social intervention if we understood it better (Haller and Miller, 1963). However, there have been few longitudinal studies which have tested the relation of aspiration to attainment, and the process has

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mostly been inferred from one-time studies (Kuvlesky and Bealer, 1967; Kuvlesky, 1969). Of course there is a theoretical basis for assuming a link between projections and attainment, in the contention of McClelland (1953) and others that aspiration is an essential component in the motivation to achieve, operating somewhat like a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is buttressed by functional theory that sees division of labor and varying status levels as necessary and desirable and the aspiration-attainment process as a functional "sorting out" to fill necessary status-roles (Davis and Moore, 1945). But on the other hand there is Merton's theory of anomie or deviance deriving from the gap between societal expectations and one's means to achieve them (Merton, 1957).

The U.S. research on status projections has been carried out during a period when the communications and civil rights revolutions have been lessening the isolation of rural and deprived people and increasingly immersing the youth of these groups in national norms and lifestyles, presumably enchancing self-concepts, broadening horizons, and raising expectations among them. These societal changes, plus the normal time lag between data collection and analysis and publication, have made it difficult to cumulate and codify the findings of the disparate studies and, in the case of the few longitudinal studies, to tell how much change over time is due to maturation of the youth and how much reflects societal changes during the period. But, in any case, there is much reason to believe that the structural obstacles to achievement have not been removed as fast or as completely as the psychological impediments.

Until a few years ago most of the status projection and attainment research by rural sociologists was concentrated in the Midwestern states and involved mainly white middle-class high school students. Because of the nature of the rural Midwestern population few blacks or poverty-stricken youth were included, and when the sample consisted of youth in the latter years of high school some of the more deprived youth were automatically excluded because they were no longer in school. Moreover, most of the studies focused largely or entirely on boys, on the implicit assumption that careers and status attainment are more important for males, or that the status of females is determined by that of their husbands.

In the last 10 years, career research has spread to the South and other regions and other categories of youth have been included. The study in which I have been involved for the past eight years is different in a number of respects from most of the earlier studies and may help fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge. This study was planned and conducted by sociologists and child development specialists in seven Southern states. Most of the data are still unpublished (Influences, 1974).

We focused specifically on low-income youth from deprived groups, started with younger children, interviewed the children's mothers, experimented with social intervention in the career process, and have carried out a reinterview, enabling longitudinal analysis. In our 1969 baseline study, data were obtained from 1500 fifth-and sixth-grade children (aged 11-13 years) and their mothers in three low-income subcultures--rural white Appalachians, rural blacks, and inner-city urban blacks--plus a small sample of poor urban whites in one state. In 1971 we carried out an experimental

phase in which subsamples of mothers in each of the states were involved in a series of lesson-discussions on "Helping your child with his/her career planning," with before and after reinterviews of both mothers and children to see if any change in career knowledge, attitudes, or practices had been effected. In 1975, six years after the baseline study, we again interviewed the youth and subsamples of the mothers, reaching about three-fourths the original sample in six of the seven states. At this time the youth were aged about 16 to 19 and typically in the last two years of high school, though some had graduated and substantial numbers had dropped out before high school graduation. In 1975 we also obtained new samples of fifth-and sixth-grade children in the same or comparable schools. Thus we have a basis for assessing two kinds of change over the six years--societal change as reflected in the comparative responses of children of the same age and socioeconomic status at the two times, and the combination of maturational and societal change as reflected in the answers of the same youth six years apart. Unfortunately, in the latter case, we cannot entirely separate what is maturational change from that reflecting societal change, but then growing up never takes place in a static society and is always a combination of both kinds of change.

In the rest of this paper I will pose some issues or questions that seem to me important in career process research, summarize briefly what previous research seems to show, and introduce preliminary data just now becoming available from our study that relate to these questions. Then I want to go beyond our study and most of the current research and discuss briefly some larger issues about the current focus and directions of this kind of research and what we perhaps should be doing in the future.

SOME QUESTIONS THAT RESEARCH IS BEGINNING TO ANSWER

The following questions are not unique to me. Some of them have been posed by Kuvlesky (1970, 1969) and others in the few attempts that have been made to codify existing research. As will be noted, the questions I have chosen to discuss lean toward the practical and policy-related, but I believe they have important implications for theory:

1. How much do youth status projections influence actual status attainment?

2. Do rural youth have low aspirations, compared to urban youth and other groups?

3. Do economically deprived and minority youth have low aspirations compared to others?

4. How do the status projections of girls differ from those of boys, and are the differences now tending to disappear?

5. How do sex, race, and rural-urban residence compare as differentiators of status projections?

6. What types of persons do youth turn to for advice and discussion concerning career interests?

7. Do youth career aspirations and expectations become more "realistic" as they grow older, as one influential theory maintains?

8. How are the occupational and educational projections processes similar or different? Are they best seen as one career process, or two?

9. How can society intervene in the status projections and attainment process to improve the life chances of deprived youth?

1. How much do youth status projections influence actual status attainment? Obviously this is an important question, for if status projections have little or no influence on attainment there would be little practical justification for status projection research. Unfortunately, as indicated previously, there have been few good longitudinal studies, and thus little real testing of the presumed influence. Kuvlesky, one of the researchers who has worked with longitudinal data and also one who has attempted some codification, has concluded that projections are not, in general, very good predictors of attainment, though low occupational projections are more closely linked to low attainment than are high job projections to high attainment (Kuvlesky, 1969). The important influence of family background and socioeconomic status as well as other structural factors is well documented for the United States, even though there is evidence that these are less determining than in many other societies (Ramsøy, 1953). It seems probable that structural factors are on the whole more influential than aspiration, or, more specifically, that aspiration is a limited influence operating within structurally defined categories of youth.

From our own study we as yet have no data on attainment, but our data on school dropout or retention or to high school completion may be relevant. Despite verbal statements to the contrary by some of the youth, it seems unlikely that many young people who, by 1975, had left school without graduating will re-enter academic training. In effect, then, most of them already have their educational attainment. And terminating schooling at this stage effectively precludes their entering most of the high-status occupations that the majority of our samples aspired to six years earlier. Preliminary analysis of our data indicated no relation between the level of occupational aspiration in 1969 and whether or not the youth left school before graduation from high school. On the other hand, the child's educational projection and his I.Q. score were moderately related to his school leaving or staying and his family background, especially his mother's education, were strongly related. These data seem to support the previous findings of relatively low aspirational influence and the important influence of family background on attainment.

Also of considerable interest is the fact that among these low-income youth, whites had a substantially higher dropout rate than blacks. This is in keeping with a similar but smaller black-white difference in aspiration among out samples and seems to suggest that aspiration has some relation to educational attainment, at least.

2. Do rural youth have low aspirations, compared with urban youth and other groups? Studies done in the 1950's and the early 60's generally reported that rural and farm youth had lower aspirations than others, and this was seen as a major factor in low attainment by them. The needed social intervention was thought to be programs to raise the aspirations of rural youth. In the past 10 years, however, most of the studies have been showing rather small differences, or none at all, in the stated aspirations of rural and other youth, especially during the high school years, the period in which most of the studies have been conducted.

Our data for fifth- and sixth-grade children from low-income families show very little rural-urban difference and very high occupational and educational aspirations among all children. The uniformly high aspirations and expectations were particularly true of the 1969 samples, with over half up to three-quarters of all race-sex-residence groups aspiring to finish college, and similar proportions of each group aspiring to professional and managerial occupations, except in the case of urban and rural white boys, whose occupational projections were lower. In 1975, though aspirations in all groups were still high there was some tendency for rural children to have lower aspirations, both as compared to urban children in that year and compared to rural children six years earlier. Race and sex differences were, on the whole, greater than residence differences, however.

3. Do economically deprived and minority youth have low aspirations compared to others? The answer to this question, as provided by previous research, is similar to that for rural youth. Some studies in the 1950's and early 1960's tended to show lower aspirations on the part of youth in these groups, and more recent studies have tended to show all groups with similarly high aspiration levels.

Our own data do not permit direct comparison of economically deprived youth with others, since all of our respondents are from low-income families. Clearly, however, the verbalized aspirations of the low-income elementary school children were high both in 1969 and 1975, as indicated by the data just mentioned. Our data for the 1969 children reinterviewed six years later show a movement downward toward probably more realistic levels, but still with nearly half of the older youth aspiring to some college training and to professional-type jobs.

As to whether blacks have lower aspirations than white youth, our data show rather clearly the opposite, with the socioeconomic status of the two groups held more or less constant by our sampling procedure. Most other studies have compared blacks and whites without regard to economic level. Both in 1969 and 1975 fifth-and sixth-grade blacks stated higher educational and occupational aspirations than whites, except in the case of urban white girls, whose aspirations were at about the same level or a little higher than those of urban black girls.

Moreover, there was a distinct tendency for the aspirations of white youth to decline more over the six years than those of the blacks. This was particularly true of the youth reinterviewed after six years.

In 1975, among these older youth, blacks had substantially higher aspirations than the corresponding group of whites,[1] in almost every case. White boys, both rural and urban, had the lowest occupational aspirations, while white girls tended to have the lowest educational aspirations.

4. How do the status projections of girls differ from those of boys, and are the differences now tending to disappear? The focus of status projections research has been almost exclusively on males. Many studies have been confined to males, and those that have sampled both sexes have frequently not reported on girls specifically or have made sex comparisons only incidentally in exploring other questions. In our study we had about equal numbers of boys and girls and parallel analyses have been made for each sex.

In our data the most obvious difference between boys and girls is that girls tend to name only a very few occupations, while boys spread much more widely in their occupational aspirations. Among the elementary girls in both 1969 and 1975 from half to three-fourths of every residence-race grouping aspired to one of three "traditional" women's occupations--nurse, teacher or secretary. Since teacher and nurse, the two most frequently named, are both classified as professional occupations and have relatively high prestige, this tends to make girls score higher on aspirations than boys, even though these traditional women's occupations pay only moderate salaries and some of the lower-ranked manual occupations that boys aspire to pay more. There is another problem, also, in the fact that "nurse" may cover a range of occupational levels but the girls did not specify which one in stating their aspirations and, in the absence of such specification (i.e., registered nurse vs. practical nurse vs. nurse's aide), we felt compelled to assume they were aspiring to the full professional level of nursing.

In both years, then, the occupational aspirations of girls tended to be higher than those of boys in the same race-residence grouping. Among blacks, the aspiration levels of boys and girls tended to be more similar than among whites, where the levels of boys were substantially lower, because of the much larger proportions of white boys aspiring to craftsman and operative job categories. The comparative levels of educational aspiration were similar to those for occupations.

With the renewed drive for sex equality in the United States during the past decade, symbolized by the "Women's Liberation" movement, one of our interests has been to see if there have been changes in girls' aspirations from 1969 to 1975. As already indicated, the comparative levels of aspirations did not change much, with fifth-and sixth-grade girls continuing to score higher than boys. There is some evidence, but not a great

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[1]Urban whites were interviewed in only one state in 1969, so that the comparison of time change between urban whites and blacks is based on rather limited data. But the rural samples of both blacks and whites were substantial.

deal, that girls in the latter year were more likely to choose a wider variety of occupations other than those traditionally assigned to women. Still, more than half of each grouping of girls continued to choose nurse, teacher, and secretary. Apparently Women's Liberation has not yet penetrated very far, insofar as affecting the aspirations of the younger low-income youth.

When the teenagers in our 1975 sample were compared with themselves as preadolescents in 1969, there was a somewhat wider spread in girls' occupational choices, with less concentration of choices on the three traditional occupations. Fewer at this age aspired to be teachers and nurses, probably because they by then realized that they were unlikely to complete the required college training. Some simply moved down the scale to other traditional women's occupations. Girls lowered their educational aspirations more than boys over the six-year period of growing up, so that by 1975, in the age range 16-19, their educational projections tended to be about the same as or lower than those of boys.

5. How do sex, race, and rural or urban residence compare as differentiators of status projections? Other studies have not directly addressed this question, to my knowledge. In our data, it is quite clear that sex makes more difference in projections than the other two status variables. As already indicated, there were substantial sex differences within race-residence categories among the elementary school children in both 1969 and 1975, and the rate and type of change differed between boys and girls in the 1975 reinterview data compared to the responses of the same individuals in 1969. The most dramatic and consistent sex differences are in the very limited range of occupations which girls aspire to. Boys also may concentrate their choices on specific occupations but in their case it seems to represent more nearly a "bandwagon" effect. For example, among our 1975 elementary school boys, over a quarter of the black urban boys aspired to be professional athletes, and a similar proportion of rural white boys wanted to be truck drivers, both proportions up substantially over those of 1969 and reflecting recent visibility and "glamorization" of these occupations in the United States.

Despite the sex differences in projections the girls do not view their sex as much of an obstacle to their getting the kind of job they want. Among the older youth almost no one--boys or girls--thought their sex would be a major negative factor and 8 out of 10 girls as compared to 9 out of 10 boys thought it would have little or no effect. Of course this is partly determined by the kind of jobs they choose in the first place. The black-white differential in perception of race as an obstacle was substantially greater, but still 6 out of 10 blacks as compared to over 9 out of 10 whites saw their race as having little effect on their changes of getting their desired jobs. We did not ask a similar question about place of residence as an obstacle, but "lack of good opportunities around here" was seen as a serious obstacle more than any other thing, and by nearly twice as many rural as urban youth.

6. What types of persons do youth turn to for advice and discussion concerning career interests? The predominant influence of parents and family on young children, in contrast to the influence of other persons and agencies, has been well documented and was assumed in the planning of our study. Mothers were questioned about how much they had talked with their children about career matters and the child was asked whom he had talked with, whose advice was most important to him, and his own perceptions of his parents' wishes for him. The data make clear the preeminence of parental influence on the child's career thinking and advice-seeking, and more particularly that of the mother, as the child perceives and reports it. No other type of person comes close to being mentioned as often as parents and, at the elementary school level, the children do not report talking much with teachers and other school personnel on career matters. On occupational aspects of careers, boys tend to talk with fathers and girls more with mothers. But mothers are very high as sources of advice for both sexes, and, on educational projections, mothers are the principal source for both sexes. Black children rely more exclusively on the mother than do whites, partly because a larger proportion of the black families in our samples are father-absent units.

Siblings, other relatives, and other children were the next most often mentioned sources of advice among the young children, with other adults, teachers, and ministers ranking last. Among the reinterviewed older youth in 1975, however, non-family persons ranked higher, with teachers moving up more than any group, especially among blacks. Still, among all groups, mothers were first and fathers also were usually named more often than any of the other groups.

7. Do youth career aspirations and expectations become more "realistic" as they grow older? In 1951 Ginzberg and associates presented a model of the occupational choice process as progressing through three stages--fantasy, tentative, and realistic--corresponding roughly to preadolescence, early adolescence, and late adolescence (Ginsberg, 1951). In the first stage aspiration is unimpeded by considerations of individual capacity or real opportunity. In the final stage, subjective choices are compromised with the "facts" of the person's self-perceived capacity and constraints. Although this model has been widely adopted or referred to in the literature, there have been few real tests of its validity, and a number of studies have produced evidence that aspirations do not become more realistic as youth mature, at least within the limited time-frame of the high school years (Kuvlesky, 1969).

Our 1969 fifth and sixth graders correspond approximately in age to Ginzberg's fantasy stage, and the same youth interviewed again in 1975 correspond to his realistic stage. Although the sample suffered about 25 percent attrition over the six years--more in some sub-groupings and less in others-- our study probably constitutes one of the better tests of the model, since it stretches more or less over the three stages.

The data show substantial declines in the educational aspiration level in every race-residence-sex grouping, with greater declines among the girls, who initially had the higher educational aspirations--with the

result that at 16 to 19 years of age the girls were at about the same or lower levels than the boys. The declines were much less for blacks than for whites, so that at this age the black-white differentials were quite large, with blacks consistently higher than the corresponding groupings of whites. For example in rural areas the proportion of black youths aspiring to college education is twice as high as that for whites of the same sex. The differentials in urban areas are not much less. Over a third of the white boys and girls had already dropped out of school before graduation from high school, as compared to fewer than 20 percent of the blacks.

Occupational aspirations also generally declined, but not as substantially or consistently. Urban boys, black and white, moved up somewhat, in contrast to all the other groupings. There was a general movement toward the middle-level occupations--crafts, and sales and clerical--from both higher and lower levels. Black-white change differentials were not as great as in the case of educational aspirations, but, even so, in 1975 blacks consistently had higher occupational aspirations than the corresponding groupings of whites.

Another kind of projection relevant to the question of whether youth become more "realistic" as they mature is their response to a question on how far they think they really will go in school and what kind of job they think they really will have (their expectations)--in contrast to what they would like if they had their choice (their aspirations). In the 1969 baseline study of 10-to 13-year-olds, aspirations and expectations were rather close together, suggesting little awareness at this age of the difficulty of attaining desired levels. Expectations declined even more than aspirations over the six years, so that in 1975 they were much lower, with only a fifth to a quarter of the reinterviewed white students in 1975 expecting professional and managerial jobs as compared to a third to a half of the black students. Similarly, the expectation of going to college was down to 10 to 20 percent of the late adolescent whites and 40 to 50 percent of the blacks.

Thus, our data seem to offer considerable support for the developmental model, when youth are followed from preadolescence to late adolescence. That this is less than a perfect explanation and that youth projections are still substantially in the idealistic realm (Haller, 1974) and influenced heavily by societal norms and current trends is suggested by the still high aspiration levels of the black youth in our study, for whom social mobility opportunities almost certainly do not exist in the same proportion.

8. <u>How are the occupational and educational projections processes similar or different? Are they best seen as one career process or two?</u> Theoretically status projection and attainment are one process, since educational attainment is so intrinscially linked to occupational attainment and both are intrinsic to status in our society. Most of the models and mini-theories that we have do not separate the two, except in recognizing education as a step along the path to occupational attainment. In empirical studies, however, they have usually been treated partly separately,

or the focus has been mainly on one or the other. Previous research as well as our own data suggest a correlation, but a rather imperfect one between educational and occupational projections. Of course the correlation should not necessarily be perfect, since education is widely viewed as a desirable goal in and of itself.

It seems clear that fifth-and sixth-grade children do not have a very strong awareness of the educational requirements of specific jobs they aspire to, but in a sense they "covered" themselves by the very large proportions in this age-group aspiring to a college education. Six years later the same youth stated much lower aspirations and expectations and their increasing awareness of the link between education and occupation was apparent. For example, "teacher" was one of the most aspired to occupations at the younger age, especially by girls, but in the reinterview the proportion was much lower, presumably because the older youth realized the necessity of at least four years of college to enter this occupation and many now recognized that they were unlikely to get that much education--or perhaps no longer wanted to. There were still many incongruent cases, with some of the older youth who had already dropped out of school aspiring to occupations that require college training.

We also have evidence, based on refined analysis of the 1969 baseline data which has not yet been repeated for the 1975 data, that somewhat different paths of influence lead to the educational as opposed to the occupational projections of the elementary children. Occupational projection was primarily dependent upon a small cluster of maternal measures (especially the mother's occupational projection for the child), while educational projection was additionally dependent on the child's motivation, self-evaluation, intelligence, family background, and mother-child interpersonal relationships. This may perhaps be interpreted as a function of the student's then-current participation in the educational attainment process while anticipatory socialization in the occupational attainment process was still largely non-existent. We expect that parallel analysis of the 1975 data, both the new elementary sample and the reinterviewed youth, will provide a more definitive answer to this question.

9. <u>How can society intervene in the status projections and attainment process to improve the life chances of deprived youth? Can children's career thinking and knowledge be influenced through group sessions with their mothers?</u> There have been practically no controlled experiments in social intervention in the career process. The specific question that we addressed in the experimental phase of out study has not otherwise been formally investigated, to my knowledge. Our experiment, conducted two years after the baseline study, when the children were ages 12-15, was based on research information (from out study and others) that mothers are the most influential single persons in the socialization of children and in their early career thinking specifically (Kandel, 1969). We believed that early adolescence, the junior high school years, was the period when social intervention might be most useful, to increase the salience of career thinking at a time when sports and exploratory relations with the opposite

sex overshadow academic interests in peer group approval. We saw such intervention at this time as partly making up for their lack of the middle-class parental support and norms of high status aspiration and attainment, and helping them make the right choices in high school. We saw low-income mothers as having underutilized potential for influencing their children and supplementing the efforts of the schools and other agencies. We planned to capitalize on the advantages of group decision-making and commitment by the mothers, which have been shown to be more effective in achieving change than working through single individuals.

When it came to the specific design of the experiment, however, we began to realize some of the difficulties of a social experiment. Our resources would not permit more than three lesson-discussion sessions with a sub-sample of the mothers in each state, obviously not a heavy enough "treatment" to expect a lot of measurable change, particularly since the change was expected to take place in the children with the mothers as intermediaries. We decided that the best we could hope to do was to increase the knowledge of mothers and children about occupations, their educational requirements, the work done, and the rewards--rather than attempting basic attitudinal and motivational change. Besides, we had already found out that raising the children's aspirations was not the issue, since they were already very high. This was to be done by feeding information to the mothers, heightening their interest, and creating group commitment for actively helping the children with career exploration. A trained teacher-discussion leader, local resource people, charts, and printed materials were used and the 1½ hour sessions were held at one-or two-week intervals.

Our results were essentially negative, based on pre-and post-tests of the experimental mothers and children and those in a control group. Neither mothers nor children showed much increase in job knowledge, though the numbers of mothers and children reporting mother-child discussions about careers substantially increased. But we feel strongly that experimentation with techniques of intervention should be continued, with better designs, more intensive "treatment," and measurement of results over a longer period. Even with our limited input we feel that we may have started a process that would have shown more results if we had been able to measure them over a longer period.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Within the confines of a single paper I have perhaps tried to cover too much, resulting in summary statements that may not do justice to the literature and our data and may be inadequately qualified. Our 1975 data and 1969-75 time comparisons are just out of the computer and represent very simple, preliminary analysis based on only part of our samples. I have therefore avoided giving tables and specific figures. But we have tried to ensure that the generalizations made here will hold, even though the final figures will change and further insights as to their meaning will emerge.

Our data and the other recent empirical research show a general picture of youth from deprived backgrounds now having aspirations as high as or higher than others--low-income preadolescents' projections about as high as those of more affluent youth, blacks higher than whites, girls higher than boys, and rural about as high as urban. Our data also show their projections declining substantially from preadolescence to late adolescence, but still probably "unrealistically" high in some cases as they enter the job market or begin higher education. Should we rejoice that these deprived youth are aiming so high, based on the assumption that high aspirations are creating strong motivation that will propel them toward higher attainment than would otherwide be the case? Or should we worry about the psychological blows many will likely suffer when they encounter the real world and find themselves inadequately prepared for the competition? Is it good that low-income white boys' aspirations tend toward craft and operative jobs, such as the currently very popular truck-driving--an occupational level possibly attainable for most of them? Then what of the fact that black males of similar economic level tend toward professional jobs, professional athlete more than any other--an occupational level that would represent substantial mobility if attained but which almost certainly can be attained by only a few? Should we take comfort in the fact that girls do not see their sex as an impediment to getting desired jobs and blacks do not feel they will be greatly handicapped by their race, or does this call for greater societal effort to make it come true? Should we in the U.S.A. be relieved that what has been seen by many as overemphasis on higher education for everyone may now be tapering off, as reflected by the educational aspirations of the youth in our 1975 samples.

Since the research and the societal trends I have discussed are so specific to the U.S.A., certainly they present a challenge to U.S. society and government to make further efforts to equalize the life chances of our youth by removing the structural impediments that exist for some groups. Since this is a World Congress I suppose I should apologize for presenting a paper so exclusively based on U.S. data and context, yet the U.S. is the locus of almost all of the empirical research on the subject, so far as I am aware. I feel sure, however, that many of the same questions and issues are applicable to other societies, even though the social structure and some of the societal assumptions and values may differ and this may result in a different structuring of youth status projections and attainment. Certainly it would be useful to have parallel research data for a variety of other societies, following the lead of Schwarzweller (1973) and a few others.

FUTURE RESEARCH

I would like to close these remarks on a different, somewhat more critical, note, as we look to the future. Even though I am a part of status projection research as it has been developed in the United States, I have an emerging doubt about status attainment as the ultimate goal of youth and the ultimate dependent variable in our research. From the standpoint of the youth involved and the perspective of societal welfare, I think there are good reasons for questioning whether status attainment should be the goal of

the occupational choice process. Wouldn't life satisfaction, happiness, quality of life, or achieving a personally satisfying lifestyle be more appropriate as ultimate goals, and shouldn't we be studying the factors and processes leading to these dependent variables, with educational and occupational attainment viewed as among the means to these ends?

We questioned our older youth in 1975 about what they considered important in picking a vocation or job and found that "steady employment," "interesting or exciting work," and "a chance to help other people" came out on top, with "being one's own boss" and "becoming an important person" at the bottom in importance and "making a lot of money" intermediate. But for blacks and for all girls, "helping other people" was more often named than any other consideration, while "steady employment" continued in the lead for boys and all whites. Hindsight suggests that we might have probed further into the dimensions of life satisfaction as they are perceived to be affected by occupations.

Even though children internalize the societal ranking and status levels of occupations as well as the norm that everyone should reach for the top, as much research has shown, everyone can't attain high status. Large numbers can't move up in status without others moving down. And though the desire to achieve may provide motivation and drive, it can result in frustration for those who don't make it. But life satisfaction or a satisfying lifestyle may be achieved in a variety of ways other than through educational and occupational attainment alone. Even in our research, when we focus almost exclusively on status attainment, may we not in effect be helping to reinforce, stabilize, and legitimate inequality and competitiveness in our society?

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